

August 9, 2021

Good Parents and Students:

I hope you all have enjoyed the summer break with your loved ones and have experienced a season that resembled life before March of 2020.

Last year, parents, staff and students were united as a school body. We successfully completed the 2020-21 school year with “in person” learning the entire school year without any student or teacher quarantines. Our goal is to repeat the amazing year we had last year with an additional 20-25 students joining us this academic year.

We will continue to implement our strict cleaning procedures, including disinfecting bathrooms twice a day, cleaning student desks and tables twice a day, running air purifying machines daily, spraying classrooms every evening, and encouraging students to use hand sanitizer and bringing their individual water bottles. **Although many of our mitigation strategies against the coronavirus will still be in practice, as of now masking will be a parent’s choice.** Our primary goal has always been to care for the well-being of our students, teachers, and staff. We define well-being as the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social well-being. Because of this holistic approach, we set our goals to conduct in-person learning as much as possible, with as few restrictions as possible. If parents wish for their child to wear masks, please inform the office by calling 989-366-5592 or emailing ollsc@ollrcs.org, and our staff will encourage your child to wear their mask regularly.

OLLRCS’s masking decision is made for today, and as situations change so could school protocols. For example, if there is a mandate by our Governor for masks, we would follow the mandate to maintain our foremost goal of in-person learning.

It weighs heavily to decide against CDC and Health Department guidelines, which recommend universal masking for teachers and students. However, it is important to remember that these are recommendations and not mandates. We will always follow mandates; however, recommendations allow our own experience and local expertise to bear weight on final decisions. Even with the new variant, the high level of vaccinations coupled with the number who have immunity through previously contracting the virus put us in an entirely different place than when making decisions last year. Further, our local school data is the most important data that we have. For example, last year, we only had one confirmed school associated case among students, which did not require any quarantining of students or staff. Additionally, OLLRCS did not quarantine any students due to contact tracing within our school. I credit our success to our amazing Savior, continued prayers from our church and school community, and the incredible sacrifices last year's families made to keep everyone safe at OLLRCS. We were blessed with a very responsible school community that worked together for the safety of our school family.

Main points to Our Lady of the Lake Regional Catholic School’s COVID-19 protocols include:

- **OLLRCS will foster an environment of Christian charity and respect for others’ decisions regarding vaccination status and use of masks.**
- OLLRCS will continue to utilize the CDC guidance for cleaning, disinfection, and hand hygiene.
- OLLRCS will continue to use many of the distancing strategies for indoor activities that were used last year.
- Parents/guardians should monitor their children for symptoms of infectious illness every day

before arrival at school. You will not need to complete a daily health survey.

- Students who are sick or displaying symptoms of infectious illness should not attend school and seek medical care when necessary.
- OLLRCS will report positive cases to the Health Department and report positive cases to school families.
- Positive cases will be required to isolate at home for the requisite period based on Health Department guidelines.
- OLLRCS will follow the Mass protocols as established by the Diocese.
- While the school is NOT requiring masks at school events, the use of facial coverings is required by federal order on school buses and other forms of public transportation in the United States.

As I was speaking with our interim Superintendent last week he said, “Remind your parents how successful your schools were last year. Your students grew academically and spiritually, while thousands of schools across the country experienced academic regression.” Indeed, our schools showed good growth again last year because of our partnership and commitment to in-person, Christ-centered education. Even when we had to make changes, which we may have to this year, we remembered our mission.

Many Blessings,

Michelle L. Johnson
Our Lady of the Lake Regional Catholic School Principal